Bindnagles
Lutheran Church

PALMYRA, R. D. 1, PA.

Bindnagles Evangelical Lutheran Church

The German Lutherans came to America early in the 18th century. They settled in Penn's Woods because of the liberal terms offered by William Penn who was of German extraction. These German settlers held family worship around family altars which soon became common altars around which as many families would gather as could conveniently be seated. John Casper Stoever performed pastoral acts among these groups in 1733, 1736, 1739 & 1740. The oldest tankard marked 1745 seems to date the congregation, for if they had no organization they would not have provided for a communion vessel.

Hans Bindnagle gave 5 acres & 20 perches of ground for a church site on January 27, 1753. A pewter vessel from M. Miller, dated 1754, and an altar cloth from Hans Bindnagle of the same date indicate the year of the consecration of the first church.

Rev. Stoever served until Ascension Day, May 13, 1779, when he died while in the act of confirming a class of catechumens at the Hill Church north of Cleona.

Rev. Frederic V. Melshimer, who served as a chaplain in the Hessian regiment of the Brunswick Dragoons, was the next pastor and remained until 1786 or 1787. The present pastor, The Rev. Dr. Warren C. Heinly is the 30th to serve this congregation.

After the log church served the congregation, which grew to 162 members in 48 years, it was felt advisable to build a larger, more permanent structure. The members made their subscriptions and solicited more from their neighbors. Approximately 400 subscribers of all faiths, located in Derry, Londonderry, Annville and Hanover townships, whose donations ranged from 2 shilling to 40 pound, were recorded. These payments were to be made in three installments: on January 1, 1803, when the new church was under roof, and when it was completed. The cost of the whole building was 909 pound, 3 shilling and 11-1/2 pence or a little over $2,424.50. As a tribute to the everlasting integrity of the German settlers, records show that but twelve of the four hundred (3%) failed to meet their obligations.

The interior of the church is designed in the form of the Greek cross with a wine-glass pulpit at the apex. The communion table, enclosed by a railing, is in the centre of the cross design. High-backed pews with narrow seats form the sides and base of the cross, all facing the centre. In this setting the liturgical service is ably supported by the congregation as the body of Christ. With the Pastor in the centre, the worshippers practice their belief in the priesthood of all believers and in their oneness as the body of Christ. This stresses the responsibility of the lay folk to work out the works of Him who has redeemed them. "All one Body we" makes participants, not spectators, of all worshippers. Fittingly, prayerfully, and earnestly entered into by the people, the service is sincere worship of God, who renews all of life.

The simple dignity of the unspoiled religious shrine was changed in 1885, when John Cardell painted the walls and Doric-type columns to represent Swedish marble. The ceiling has old-world style decorations at the centre and the four corners. This work was done at a cost of $769.34.

After council members and church leaders gave long and careful study to the need for more adequate facilities, the congregation voted to erect a new edifice housing rest room facilities and a hot water heating system which provides heat for the old church. Also included are four classrooms for children of kindergarten and primary age. A small kitchen makes possible social functions. This work was under a contract of $44,063.00 with Harry F. McCurdy.

Also, at the time this work was progressing, a new garage and storage shed was built under the leadership of Paul Phillippy and Lloyd Bomgardner, assisted by members of the congregation. This was partly financed by an S.B.A. loan of $6,500.00, because the old shed was greatly weakened by the flood of June 1972, which reached heights unknown in the long history of Bindnagles.

Though Bindnagles can claim no sons of the congregation who entered the ministry, she may well claim the title of "Mother" church, for from this group sprang five congregations who now serve elsewhere in God's vineyard. They are Campbelltown in 1792, Centre county in 1801, Shells in 1821 and Palmyra and Zions in 1845. The church stands as a monument to the earnest zeal, the self denying labors, and the praiseworthy generosity of those early pioneers who reared this temple to the God of their fathers as a testimony of their faith. May we cherish their memory and imitate their faith and good works.

ISRAEL B. EARLEY June, 1973